

SEARLE'S SUPERB WINNER CHECKS SUTTON REVIVAL

KEITH SEARLE, out of touch for much of the season, silenced his critics with an outstanding performance at Loakes Park on Saturday. It was Searle who fittingly snatched the deciding goal in the second half with a brilliant individual effort to give Wycombe Wanderers three welcome Rothmans Isthmian League points against Sutton.

Despite the fact that he was facing England's centre half last season, Micky Preston, Searle gave the sort of display that was common place last year before he badly injured knee ligaments. His timing in the air and the ability to finish was one of the game's key factors and augers well for Saturday's Cup tie against Middlesbrough.

It was a shame that a few of Keith's team-mates could not match his endeavour. If they had, Wycombe would probably have ended up winners by a more emphatic margin. There were times when the home side looked stoats ahead of Sutton, tearing their defence to shreds with some fine attacking football. But there were also other times when lack of concentration allowed the opposition to get back into the game.

Wanderers, for instance, were two goals up after 16 minutes — both goals coming inside 120 seconds — but by half time they found themselves back on level terms.

The man mainly responsible for Sutton's revival was a former Wycombe player — Larry

Phillips' square pass and almost let in Ricky Kidd. Bullock brought him down at the expense of a free kick.

The constant whistle of referee Knock meant the first few minutes became scrappy with little flow. The game was only seven minutes old when

from the re-start Wanderers hit the target again. Another long cross, this time from Paul Birdseye, again eluded the goalkeeper and this time Kennedy struck the ball low and hard across the box. Searle pounced to slam home his ninth goal of the season.

volleyed just over the bar in the 34th minute.

With that amount of time, Wycombe continued to impress but a debatable penalty award in the 42nd minute saw their lead pegged back again. However, whether the decision was correct or not, Wanderers should

around Preston and then placed the ball beautifully past the diving Collyer for one of the best goals of the season.

After that, Keith was almost unbeatable in the air and consequently Wycombe looked extremely dangerous in attack. Sutton, however, were not going to submit without a fight. Inspired by Pritchard, who as usual covered every blade of grass on the pitch, they hauled themselves back with newcomer Alan Walker sending a fierce volley only just over the top.

As the half progressed Wycombe began to lose the grip in midfield. Kennedy was rarely seen which put greater pressure on Reardon and Alexander. The defence too, took too long to clear potentially dangerous situations.

Chances were limited on both sides. Tony Horsemann curled a shot just too high after another fine run by Alexander but that proved the final scoring opportunity of the match.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Bullock, D. Alexander, T. Reardon, H. Kennedy, A. Horsemann (sub D. Evans 87 mins), K. Searle, S. Perrin.
SUTTON: R. Collyer, M. Fountain, J. Rains (sub D. Tatum 64 mins), M. Preston, C. Grose, S. McDonald, L. Pritchard, A. Walker, R. Kidd, G. Dennis, A. Ives.

Referee: P. Knock (Oxford).
Half-time: 2-2.
Goalscorers: WYCOMBE: Searle 2 (18, 51); Bullock 1 (81); Sutton: Ives 2 (27, 42 pen).
Approximate paying attendance: 1,876.
2,350.

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 3, Sutton United 2

Pritchard. After a slow start when he was played out of the game by Terry Reardon, Pritchard set his colleagues a superb example in midfield, constantly inducing deserved applause from the large crowd. It seemed a great shame Larry was not in a blue shirt and indeed, will not be turning out for Wanderers next week.

Wycombe made a surprise change in defence on Saturday, bringing in Dave Bullock at left back for Gary Hand, the latter dropping out after a poor game at Kingstonian last week. The other switch was the inclusion of Dave Alexander in midfield for the injured Mick Hollifield.

Conditions for the game were not as bad as first feared. There was a strong wind but both sides mastered it well. The pitch, which cut up after the first 15 minutes, looked more of a problem as Bullock almost found to his cost early on when he slipped in collecting Alan

Ken Grose went into the referee's book for scything down Searle, a rather unfortunate caution for Grose considering Bullock had got away with a similar offence minutes earlier. It was United's second booking this term.

From the free kick, the ball was half cleared out to Bullock. Dave hooked in a tremendous shot which dipped as it approached the net from some 35 yards but then cannoned off the crossbar. A couple of high crosses soon emphasised a weakness in defence, caused mainly by the faulty handling of 'keeper Rick Collyer, who looked suspect with every high ball. He paid the price for his indecision in the 15th minute.

Howard Kennedy's corner was driven into the sixth yard box. Collyer only half punched clear and Bullock, up for the set-piece drove the ball through a crowd of players to put the Blues one up. Virtually straight

The double burst of scoring rocked Sutton and with Reardon impressive in midfield, Wanderers began to find acres of space with their intelligent running off the ball. Despite several close shaves, Sutton still gave the home side all the time they needed.

With Wycombe constantly foraging forward, it came as a surprise when United snatched a goal back in the 27th minute. From Sutton's first corner of the match, Preston back-headed Graham Dennis's flag kick at the near post and after a tussle on the line, Alan Ives slotted the ball home.

Wanderers replied immediately. Searle outjumped Preston to set up another raid which Alexander carried on to Perrin but Collyer dived well to hold the shot and then Horsemann, allowed to control the ball, turn and then run five yards into the penalty area as Sutton stood and waited,

never have put themselves in the situation for they had two opportunities to clear the danger from their penalty area before Dennis followed the ball into the box. As the striker jumped to head on, Bullock rose with him and although making contact with the ball, he knocked Dennis flying and the referee decided on the penalty. Ives made no mistake from the spot.

The remaining minutes of the half belonged to Sutton who gave the Blues quite a few anxious moments before the interval. After the break, Wycombe went straight onto the attack. Alexander put in a fine run in the first few seconds but shot too weakly but at the other end Kidd drove powerfully over the top.

With the half six minutes old, Keith Searle produced a real flash of brilliance. He picked up possession some 40 yards out and set off on a run. Beating two defenders, he cut inside, jinked